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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8329
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002209

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ERBIL: DE MISTURA SAYS KRG STILL COMMITTED TO
PROCESS

REF: A. REF A: BAGHDAD 1743
[1](#)B. REF B: BAGHDAD 1733
[1](#)C. REF C: BAGHDAD 2150

Classified By: RRT Erbil Regional Coordinator Jess Baily for Reasons 1.
4 (b,d).

This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team message.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: UN SRSG Staffan de Mistura met in mid-July with Kurdish officials in the wake of the release of his Phase I reports on Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) and the criticism of the process those reports had caused. De Mistura remained confident that the Kurdish leadership will stay engaged through Phases II and III, agreed to adjust some of the details laid out in the initial reports, and stressed to Kurdish leaders that the UN process aims to set the stage for discussion, rather than offer final solutions on DIBs. He encouraged them to look beyond the details and take advantage of this historic opportunity for resolution the process was offering. End summary.

KRG Leadership Remains Engaged in DIBs Process

[1](#)2. (C) In July 11-14 meetings with KRG President Masoud Barzani, PM Nechirvan Barzani, KRG Vice President Kosrat Rasul, Politburo members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), as well as Sulaimaniyah-based judges and academics, UN SRSG de Mistura heard restatements of public criticism leveled at him and the UN Phase I reports on DIBs, but nothing that had not already appeared in the press, his chief of staff Siddharth Chatterjee told RRT Regional Coordinator on July 14. Chatterjee noted that de Mistura, drawing on conversations earlier in the week with KNA officials, had largely disarmed and deflected his critics in the Kurdish leadership by acknowledging some shortcomings in the UN's Phase I reports and promising to allow for more consultation in Phases II and III. By his last meeting with PM Barzani the tone had become more collegial, and Nechirvan admitted that the Kurds had increased expectations vis a vis Kirkuk, to which de Mistura responded that the UN process could provide the wiggle room for the KRG to lower expectations.

KNA Still Committed Despite Public Posturing

[1](#)3. (C) In a July 11 meeting in Erbil with RRT Regional Coordinator, de Mistura characterized his July 10 meetings with Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) members as broadly positive. He said the Kurds, critical public rhetoric differs from their private reaction to the Phase I initial reports on resolving Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs), and underscored his belief that the Kurdish leadership - despite its public criticism of the initial reports - remains willing to engage through the release of the Phase II and III reports, expected by the end of September. Di Mastura explained that he was trying to maintain forward momentum on

the process while managing reactions and expectations. His advice to the Kurdish leadership was not to get too bogged down in the details at this very initial stage, to view the process as an historic opportunity, and to refrain from overreactions that would give the Arabs on a silver platter⁸ either the option of armed conflict over Kirkuk or inertia on the issue for another 50 years.

Di Mastura to Adjust Details of Phase I

¶4. (C) Noting that the strong Kurdish reaction to Phase I was, in some ways, justified, de Mistura indicated that he and his team were ready to adjust the details⁸ in preparing the second and third phases, and that the next round of reports would include a re-presentation⁸ of Phase I. He agreed to at least two changes due to Kurdish criticism: 1) inserting language referring to the historic victimization of the Kurdish people, and 2) removing references to tribes in the Akre portion of the Phase I reports, which de Mistura admitted were included in an unsuccessful attempt by the UN to demonstrate its knowledge of the region,⁸ but which had unintentionally touched nerves and caused offense, particularly with Masoud Barzani. De Mistura stressed that he is attempting to extend the Article 140 process under the new clothes⁸ of UNSCR 1770; and was pleased that his primary concerns - the end of the six-month extension on June 30 causing friction or the parties ignoring the Phase I reports) had not materialized.

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Akre, Qaraj, Hamdaniya, and Mandali

¶5. (C) In his conversations with KNA officials, de Mistura discussed in turn the four disputed territories covered in Phase I. In response to Kurdish questioning over why he chose to include Akre, an area under Kurdish control for years, de Mistura responded that the inclusion of Akre was appropriate in the process if only to bestow legitimacy on the status quo. Regarding Qaraj (a piece of Makhmur district which de Mistura recommended splitting off from the KRG), the SRSG explained to his Kurdish interlocutors that he had heard opposing views from Kurds and Sunnis about the possible reactions of 11,000-15,000 tribesmen should the district fall under Kurdish administration, and that he would be happy to facilitate a meeting between them and Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi to discuss the question. On Mandali, de Mistura responded to Kurdish criticism that it should have been treated the same as Qaraj) and thus returned to the KRG) by arguing that the comparison is invalid because Mandali is already a sub-district and the two face different conditions. On Hamdaniya, de Mistura assured his critics that the security of minorities in the area was paramount and that any change in status or removal of Peshmerga forces currently offering protection could only occur once the five conditions in the initial reports were implemented or became implementable.

De Mistura: Best Opportunity in 87 Years

¶6. (C) De Mistura underscored that he had stressed to the Kurdish leadership that the process would serve as a basis for negotiation and discussion should the parties choose to use it, and that nothing would be cast in iron⁸ until a final decision by the GOI. He told RRTOffs (If they want to negotiate, then they will have the means for it) one that was better than a hostile referendum or a battle for Kirkuk,⁸ and the best opportunity for resolving the issue in 87 years.

17. (C) Lastly, de Mistura,s message to Senior Advisor Krajewski and RRT Erbil was to &keep doing what you are doing.⁸ The critical message to keep the Kurdish leadership in the game is to stay in the process, not to overreact or fixate on the details at this early stage. De Mistura said he is happy to be the lightning rod for public criticism aimed at domestic political consumption as long as the KRG remains at the table.
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